

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

# CHINA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION  
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



JUNE 2013 CCD

## A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to join Peace Corps/China. By becoming part of the Peace Corps, you are joining 200,000 Americans who have served throughout the world since Peace Corps was started in 1961. In China, you are joining almost 800 Peace Corps Volunteers who have served here since 1993.

China, with one of the oldest continuous civilizations on Earth, faces huge challenges based on the sheer number of people. With 1.3 billion people, it has nearly 20 percent of the world's population, of which over 200 million are children of primary and middle school age—about two-thirds of the total population of the United States. Because of a shortage of 500,000 English teachers, China Invited the Peace Corps to work with colleges and technical training institutions to prepare future English teachers and others who will need English in their careers. In urban areas, China has almost reached its goal of providing nine years of schooling for every child, but there is still a gap in the rural areas, where approximately 50 percent of the population lives.

In addition to English teaching, the Peace Corps has two other equally important goals. The first of these is for the Chinese people to get to know you as a person who lives and works with them and who lives a lifestyle that is consistent with theirs. Because of the respected position of teachers, this means you will need to dress conservatively and live on campus in the same apartment buildings where your Chinese colleagues live. The second of these goals is to learn as much as you can from your experiences so you can help explain China and its people to your community and family back home. The ability to speak Chinese is vital to achieving these two objectives. The Peace Corps will provide you with intense language immersion during your pre-service training; you will also receive resources to continue your language study at your site.

You are about to embark on what will be one of the most unique and rewarding experiences of your life. Every part of you will be called upon as you come to live and work in a complex, sophisticated, and often opaque society. You will be called upon to stretch yourself in ways you cannot imagine. Even though you will leave the Peace Corps some day, your Peace Corps experience will never leave you.

Again, congratulations. I want to thank you for your commitment to come to serve in China. Through your English teaching, your living style, and your ability to speak Chinese, you can go a long way toward promoting greater understanding in an anxious world. I hope this *Welcome Book* will begin to answer some of your questions.

I look forward to meeting you.

Bonnie Thie  
Country Director

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## CORE EXPECTATIONS

### FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS

In working toward fulfilling the Peace Corps Mission of promoting world peace and friendship, as a trainee and Volunteer, you are expected to:

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work; and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship, if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others

9. Recognize that you will be perceived, in your host country and community, as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America
10. Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service

## PEACE CORPS/CHINA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

### History of the Peace Corps in China

In March 1988, the Chinese foreign minister and then-Secretary of State George Shultz agreed in principle to place Peace Corps Volunteers in China. A year later, an exchange of letters signed by the U.S. ambassador and the secretary general of the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) and the Peace Corps opened the way to establish a Peace Corps post in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province.

In June 1989, the first group of trainees for Peace Corps/China began training in the United States. However, following the Tiananmen Square incident, the training was canceled; the China program was temporarily suspended and the trainees were offered assignments in other countries.

The first group of 18 Peace Corps/China Volunteers arrived for training in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in June 1993. Following training in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), Chinese language, and cross-cultural issues, the 18 trainees were sworn-in as Volunteers in August. They were posted to Sichuan Province, which at that time included the municipality of Chongqing. This group was viewed by the Chinese as a two-year experiment to determine whether Peace Corps was appropriate for



China. Those Volunteers completed their service and returned to the United States on schedule in the summer of 1995 as the second group arrived in Chengdu. The Peace Corps country agreement was signed on June 29, 1998.

In 1999, the Peace Corps program began in Guizhou province, followed by Gansu province in 2000. When the Municipality of Chongqing was created in 1997 a fourth political jurisdiction was added to the Volunteer assignment area list. From April 2003 until July 2004, the Peace Corps suspended the program due to the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak. From the start of the program in 1993 through September 2012, there have been 779 Peace Corps Volunteers in China. As of December 2011, there were 161 Peace Corps Volunteers serving in-country. Since the Peace Corps began work in China in 1993 through today, TEFL has been the main program. From 2000 until 2006, the Peace Corps also had an environmental education program. Today there is a Green English curriculum available for use by TEFL Volunteers.

At the national level, the Peace Corps works with the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE), which is affiliated with the Ministry of Education. CEAIE is the largest government-operated nongovernmental organization for international educational exchange in China. Founded in 1981, CEAIE has a mission of promoting Chinese educational development and enhancing understanding and friendship between Chinese and international educational communities through international exchange and cooperation. Since its establishment, it has developed cooperative linkages with more than 200 educational organizations and institutions in approximately 50 countries and regions. Under the National Outline for Medium and Long Term Educational Reform and Development (2010-2020), CEAIE helps China meet its goals to "accelerate educational reform and development through further opening-up and promoting internationalization of education."

# COUNTRY OVERVIEW: CHINA AT A GLANCE

## History

China has one of the oldest continuous civilizations, with records dating back about 3,500 years. Successive dynasties developed a system of bureaucratic control that gave the agrarian-based Chinese an advantage over neighboring nomadic and hill cultures. Chinese civilization was further strengthened by the development of a Confucian state ideology and a common written language that bridged the gaps among the country's many local languages and dialects. Whenever China was conquered by nomadic tribes, as it was by the Mongols in the 13th century, the conquerors would adopt the ways of the underlying civilization and staff the bureaucracy with local Chinese.

The last imperial dynasty was established in 1644, when the Manchus overthrew the Ming dynasty and established the Qing (Ch'ing) dynasty with Beijing as its capital. At great expense in blood and treasure, the Manchus over the next half century gained control of many border areas, including Xinjiang, Yunnan, Tibet, Mongolia, and Taiwan. The success of the early Qing period was based on the combination of Manchu martial prowess and traditional Chinese bureaucratic skills.

During the 19th century, Qing control weakened and prosperity diminished. China suffered massive social strife, economic stagnation, explosive population growth, and Western mercantile influence. The Taiping and Nian rebellions, along with a separatist movement in Xinjiang, drained Chinese resources and almost toppled the dynasty. Britain's desire to continue its illegal opium trade with China collided with imperial edicts prohibiting the drug, and the so-called First Opium War erupted in 1840. After China lost the war, Britain and other Western powers, including the United States, occupied "concessions" and gained special commercial privileges. Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanking, and in 1898, when the opium wars finally ended, Britain received a 99-year lease of the new

territories, significantly expanding the size of the Hong Kong colony.

**Early 20th Century China.** Frustrated by the Qing court's resistance to reform, young officials, military officers, and students—inspired by the revolutionary ideas of Sun Yat-sen—began to advocate the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and creation of a republic. A revolutionary military uprising on October 10, 1911, led to the abdication of the last Qing monarch. As part of a compromise to overthrow the dynasty without a civil war, the revolutionaries and reformers allowed high Qing officials to retain prominent positions in the new republic. One of these figures, General Yuan Shikai, was chosen as the republic's first president. Before his death in 1916, Yuan unsuccessfully attempted to name himself emperor. His death left the republican government all but shattered, ushering in the era of the "warlords," during which China was ruled and ravaged by shifting coalitions of competing provincial military leaders.

In the 1920s, Sun Yat-sen established a revolutionary base in south China and set out to unite the fragmented nation. With Soviet assistance, he organized the Guomindang (or "Nationalist People's Party") and entered into an alliance with the fledgling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). After Sun's death in 1925, one of his protégés, Chiang Kai-shek, seized control of the Guomindang and succeeded in bringing most of south and central China under its rule. In 1927, Chiang turned on the CCP and executed many of its leaders. The remnants fled into the mountains of eastern China. In 1934, driven out of their mountain bases, the CCP's forces embarked on a "Long March" across some of China's most desolate terrain to the northwestern province of Shaanxi, where they established a guerrilla base at Yan'an.

During the "Long March," the communists reorganized under a new leader, Mao Zedong. The bitter struggle between the Guomindang and the CCP continued openly or clandestinely through the Japanese invasion (1931-1945), even though the two parties nominally formed a united front to oppose the Japanese invaders in 1937. The war between the two parties resumed after

the Japanese defeat in 1945. By 1949, the CCP occupied most of the country.

Chiang Kai-shek fled with the remnants of his government and military forces to Taiwan, where he proclaimed Taipei to be China's "provisional capital" and vowed to re-conquer the Chinese mainland. Taiwan still calls itself the "Republic of China."

**The People's Republic of China.** In Beijing, on October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The new government assumed control of a people exhausted by two generations of war and social conflict, and an economy ravaged by high inflation and disrupted transportation links. A new political and economic order modeled on the Soviet example was quickly installed.

In the early 1950s, China undertook a massive economic and social reconstruction program. The new leaders gained popular support by curbing inflation, restoring the economy, and rebuilding many war-damaged industrial plants. The CCP's authority reached into almost every aspect of Chinese life. Party control was assured by large, politically loyal security and military forces; a government apparatus responsive to party direction; and the placement of party members into leadership positions in labor, women's, and other mass organizations.

**The "Great Leap Forward" and the Sino-Soviet Split.** In 1958, Mao broke with the Soviet model and announced a new economic program, the "Great Leap Forward," aimed at rapidly increasing industrial and agricultural production. Giant cooperatives (communes) were formed and "backyard factories" dotted the Chinese landscape. The results were disastrous. Normal market mechanisms were disrupted, agricultural production fell behind, and China's people exhausted themselves producing what turned out to be shoddy, unmarketable goods. Within a year, starvation appeared even in fertile agricultural areas. From 1960 to 1961, the combination of poor planning during the "Great Leap Forward" and bad weather resulted in one of the deadliest famines in human history.

The already strained Sino-Soviet relationship deteriorated sharply in 1959, when the Soviets started to restrict the flow of scientific and technological information to China. The dispute escalated, and the Soviets withdrew all of their personnel from China in August 1960. In 1960, the Soviets and the Chinese began to have disputes openly in international forums.

**The Cultural Revolution.** In the early 1960s, State President Liu Shaoqi and his protégé, Party General Secretary Deng Xiaoping, took over direction of the party and adopted pragmatic economic policies at odds with Mao's revolutionary vision. Dissatisfied with China's new direction and his own reduced authority, Party Chairman Mao launched a massive political attack on Liu, Deng, and other pragmatists in the spring of 1966. The new movement, the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," was unprecedented in communist history. For the first time, a section of the Chinese communist leadership sought to rally popular opposition against another leadership group. China was set on a course of political and social anarchy that lasted the better part of a decade.

In the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, Mao and his "closest comrade in arms," National Defense Minister Lin Biao, charged Liu, Deng, and other top party leaders with dragging China back toward capitalism. Radical youth organizations, called Red Guards, attacked party and state organizations at all levels, seeking out leaders who would not adhere to their principles. In reaction to this turmoil, some local People's Liberation Army (PLA) commanders and other officials maneuvered to outwardly back Mao and the radicals while actually taking steps to rein in local radical activity. Gradually, Red Guard and other radical activity subsided, and the Chinese political situation stabilized along complex factional lines. The leadership conflict came to a head in September 1971, when Party Vice Chairman and Defense Minister Lin Biao reportedly tried to stage a coup against Mao; Lin Biao allegedly later died in a plane crash in Mongolia.

In the aftermath of the Lin Biao incident, many officials criticized and dismissed from 1966 to 1969 were reinstated. Chief among these was Deng Xiaoping, who re-emerged in 1973 and was

confirmed in 1975 in the concurrent posts of Politburo Standing Committee member, PLA chief of staff, and vice premier. The ideological struggle between more pragmatic, veteran party officials and the radicals re-emerged with a vengeance in late 1975. Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and three close Cultural Revolution associates (later dubbed the "Gang of Four") launched a media campaign against Deng. In January 1976, Premier Zhou Enlai, a popular political figure, died of cancer.

On April 5, Beijing citizens staged a spontaneous demonstration in Tiananmen Square in Zhou's memory, with strong political overtones of support for Deng. Authorities forcibly suppressed the demonstration. Deng was blamed for the disorder and stripped of all official positions, although he retained his party membership.

**The Post-Mao Era.** Mao's death in September 1976 removed a towering figure from Chinese politics and set off a scramble for succession. Former Minister of Public Security Hua Guofeng was quickly confirmed as party chairman and premier. A month after Mao's death, Hua, backed by the PLA, arrested Jiang Qing and other members of the "Gang of Four." After extensive deliberations, the Chinese Communist Party leadership reinstated Deng Xiaoping to all of his previous posts at the 11th Party Congress in August 1977. Deng then led the effort to place government control in the hands of veteran party officials opposed to the radical excesses of the previous two decades.

The new, pragmatic leadership emphasized economic development and renounced mass political movements. At the pivotal December 1978 Third Plenum (of the 11th Party Congress Central Committee), the leadership adopted economic reform policies aimed at expanding rural income and incentives, encouraging experiments in enterprise autonomy, reducing central planning, and attracting foreign direct investment into China. The plenum also decided to accelerate the pace of legal reform, culminating in the passage of several new legal codes by the National People's Congress in June 1979.

After 1979, the Chinese leadership moved toward more pragmatic positions in almost all fields. The party encouraged artists, writers,

and journalists to adopt more critical approaches, although open attacks on party authority were not permitted. In late 1980, Mao's Cultural Revolution was officially proclaimed a catastrophe. Hua Guofeng, a protégé of Mao, was replaced as premier in 1980 by reformist Sichuan Party Chief Zhao Ziyang and as party general secretary in 1981 by even more reformist Communist Youth League Chairman Hu Yaobang.

Reform policies brought great improvements in the standard of living, especially for urban workers and for farmers who took advantage of opportunities to diversify crops and establish village industries. Literature and the arts blossomed, and Chinese intellectuals established extensive links with scholars in other countries.

At the same time, however, political dissent, as well as social problems such as inflation, urban migration, and prostitution, emerged. Although students and intellectuals urged greater reforms, some party elders increasingly questioned the pace and the ultimate goals of the reform program. In December 1986, student demonstrators, taking advantage of the loosening political atmosphere, staged protests against the slow pace of reform, confirming party elders' fear that the current reform program was leading to social instability. Hu Yaobang, a protégé of Deng and a leading advocate of reform, was blamed for the protests and forced to resign as CCP general secretary in January 1987. Premier Zhao Ziyang was made general secretary and Li Peng, former vice premier and minister of electric power and water conservancy, was made premier.

**1989 Student Movement and Tiananmen Square.** After Zhao became the party general secretary, the economic and political reforms he had championed came under increasing attack. His proposal in May 1988 to accelerate price reform led to widespread popular complaints about rampant inflation and gave opponents of rapid reform the opening to call for greater centralization of economic controls and stricter prohibitions against Western influence. This precipitated a political debate, which grew more heated through the winter of 1988-1989.

The death of Hu Yaobang on April 15, 1989, coupled with growing economic hardship caused by high inflation, provided the backdrop for a large-scale protest movement by students, intellectuals, and other parts of a disaffected urban population. University students and other citizens camped out in Beijing's Tiananmen Square to mourn Hu's death and to protest against those who would slow reform. Their protests, which grew despite government efforts to contain them, called for an end to official corruption and for defense of freedoms guaranteed by the Chinese constitution. Protests also spread to many other cities, including Shanghai, Chengdu, and Guangzhou. Martial law was declared on May 20, 1989. Late on June 3 and early on the morning of June 4, military units were brought into Beijing. They used armed force to clear demonstrators from the streets.

Following June 4, economic reform slowed until given new impetus by Deng Xiaoping's dramatic visit to southern China in early 1992. Deng's renewed push for a market-oriented economy received official sanction at the 14th Party Congress later in the year as a number of younger, reform-minded leaders began their rise to top positions. Deng and his supporters argued that managing the economy in a way that increased living standards should be China's primary policy objective, even if "capitalist" measures were adopted. Subsequent to the visit, the Communist Party Politburo publicly issued an endorsement of Deng's policies of economic openness. Though not completely eschewing political reform, China has consistently placed overwhelming priority on the opening of its economy.

**Third Generation of Leaders.** Deng's health deteriorated in the years prior to his death in 1997. During that time, President Jiang Zemin and other members of his generation gradually assumed control of the day-to-day functions of government. This "third generation" leadership governed collectively with President Jiang at the center. In March 1998, Jiang was re-elected president during the Ninth National People's Congress. Premier Li Peng was constitutionally required to step down from that post. He was elected to the chairmanship of the National People's Congress. Zhu Rongji was selected to replace Li as premier.



**Fourth Generation of Leaders.** In November 2002, the 16th Communist Party Congress elected Hu Jintao, who was designated by Deng Xiaoping as the "core" of the fourth generation leaders, as the new general secretary. A new Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee was also elected in November. In March 2003, General Secretary Hu Jintao was elected president at the 10th National People's Congress. Jiang Zemin retained the chairmanship of the Central Military Commission. At the Fourth Party Plenum in September 2004, Jiang Zemin retired from the Central Military Commission, passing the chairmanship and control of the People's Liberation Army to President Hu Jintao. China has committed to economic reform and opening to the outside world. The Chinese leadership has identified reform of state industries and the establishment of a social safety network as government priorities. Government strategies for achieving these goals include large-scale privatization of unprofitable state-owned enterprises and development of a pension system for workers. The leadership also downsized the government bureaucracy.

**The Next Five Years.** Over the next five years China's development pace accelerated. To investors and firms, especially following China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, China represented a vast market and a low-cost base for export-oriented production. Educationally, China continued forging ahead as partnerships and exchanges with foreign universities have helped create new research opportunities for its students. During the 2008 Summer Olympics, China as host showcased to the world its development gains of the previous two decades. International coverage of the relief efforts following a major earthquake in Sichuan province in May 2008 displayed the nation's willingness to make some internal events more transparent to the world. The new leadership is committed to generating greater economic development in the interior and providing more services to those who do not live in China's coastal areas, goals that form the core of President Hu's concepts of a "harmonious society" and "spiritual civilization," as well as "scientific development."

## Government

**Chinese Communist Party.** The more than 70-million member CCP, authoritarian in structure and ideology, continues to dominate government. Nevertheless, China's population, geographical vastness, and social diversity temper attempts to rule by decree from Beijing. Central leaders must increasingly build consensus for new policies among party members, local and regional leaders, influential non-party members, and the population at large.

In periods of greater openness, the influence of people and organizations outside the formal party structure has tended to increase, particularly in the economic realm. This phenomenon is most apparent today in the rapidly developing coastal region. Nevertheless, in all important government, economic, and cultural institutions in China, party committees work to see that party and state policy guidance is followed and that non-party members do not create autonomous organizations that could challenge party rule. Party control is tightest in government offices and in urban economic, industrial, and cultural settings; it is considerably looser in the rural and smaller urban areas, where the majority of the people live.

Theoretically, the party's highest body is the Party Congress, which is supposed to meet at least once every five years. The primary organs of power in the Communist Party include:

- The Politburo Standing Committee, which currently consists of nine members
- The Politburo, consisting of 24 full members, including the members of the Politburo Standing Committee
- The Secretariat, the principal administrative mechanism of the CCP, headed by the general secretary
- The Central Military Commission
- The Discipline Inspection Commission, which is charged with rooting out corruption and malfeasance among party cadres

## Economy

**Economic Reform.** Since 1979, China has reformed and opened its economy. The Chinese leadership has adopted a more pragmatic perspective on many political and socioeconomic problems, and has reduced the role of ideology in economic policy. China's ongoing economic transformation has had a profound impact not only on China, but on the world. The market-oriented reforms China has implemented over the past three decades have unleashed individual initiative and entrepreneurship. The result has been the largest reduction of poverty and one of the fastest increases in income levels ever seen. Today, after average annual economic growth of about 10 percent for the past 30 years, China has the second largest GDP in the world.

In the 1980s, China tried to combine central planning with market-oriented reforms to increase productivity, living standards, and technological quality without exacerbating inflation, unemployment, and budget deficits. China pursued agricultural reforms, dismantling the commune system and introducing a household-based system that provided peasants greater decision-making in agricultural activities. The government also encouraged nonagricultural activities such as village enterprises in rural areas, and promoted more self-management for state-owned enterprises, increased competition in the marketplace, and facilitated direct contact between Chinese and foreign trading enterprises.

China also relied more heavily upon foreign financing and imports. These reforms led to average annual rates of growth of 10 percent in agricultural and industrial output. Rural per capita real income doubled. China became self-sufficient in grain production and rural industries accounted for 23 percent of agricultural output, helping absorb surplus labor in the countryside. The variety of light industrial and consumer goods increased.

Reforms began in the fiscal, financial, banking, price-setting, and labor systems. By the late 1980s, however, the economy had become overheated with increasing rates of inflation. At the end of 1988, in reaction to a surge of inflation caused by accelerated price reforms, the leadership introduced an austerity program.

China's economy regained momentum in the early 1990s. During a visit to southern China in early 1992, China's paramount leader at the time, Deng Xiaoping, made a series of political pronouncements designed to reinvigorate the process of economic reform. The 14th Party Congress later backed Deng's renewed push for market reforms, stating that China's key task in the 1990s was to create a "socialist market economy." The 10-year development plan for the 1990s stressed continuity in the political system with bolder reform of the economic system.

China's economy grew at an average rate of 10 percent per year during the period 1990-2004, the highest growth rate in the world. China's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 10 percent in 2003, and even faster, 10.1 percent, in 2004, and 9.9 percent in 2005, despite attempts by the government to cool the economy. China's total trade in 2005 surpassed \$1.4 trillion, making China the world's third-largest trading nation after the U.S. and Germany. Such high growth was necessary for China to generate the 15 million jobs needed annually—roughly the population of Ecuador or Cambodia—for new entrants into the job market.

By 2011 China's GDP overtook Japan's and India's to rank second after the USA. Nevertheless, serious imbalances exist behind the spectacular trade performance, high investment flows, and high GDP growth. High numbers of nonperforming loans weigh down the state-run banking system. Inefficient state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are still a drag on growth, despite announced efforts to sell, merge, or close the vast majority of SOEs.

Social and economic indicators have improved since reforms were launched, but rising inequality is evident between the more highly developed coastal provinces and the less developed, poorer inland regions. According to World Bank estimates, more than 152 million people in China in 2003—mostly in rural areas of the lagging inland provinces—still lived in poverty, living on less than \$1 a day by U.S. standards.

According to U.N. estimates, In 2011 about 300 million continued to live below the U.N. poverty line of \$2 per day.

Following the Chinese Communist Party's Third Plenum, held in October 2003, Chinese legislators unveiled several proposed amendments to the state constitution. One of the most significant was a proposal to provide protection for private property rights. Legislators also indicated there would be a new emphasis on certain aspects of overall government economic policy, including efforts to reduce unemployment (now in the 8 percent to 10 percent range in urban areas), to rebalance income distribution between urban and rural regions, and to maintain economic growth while protecting the environment and improving social equity. The National People's Congress approved the amendments when it met in March 2004.

The Fifth Plenum in October 2005 approved the 11th Five-Year Economic Program, aimed at building a "harmonious society" through more balanced wealth distribution and improved education, medical care, and social security.

In 2009 President Obama and President Hu Jintao established the U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue to discuss a range of bilateral, regional, and global political, strategic, security, and economic issues between both countries. From 2009-2011 there have been three meetings. In 2009 there was a pledge to maintain forceful stimulus measures to help each country's individual economies and the global economy emerge from the international financial crisis. Both countries also pledged measures to promote a more balanced pattern of growth in their economies and strong and sustainable global growth once a recovery was fully in place.

At the 2010 meeting, China was the third largest and fastest growing major economy and was the third largest export destination for U.S. goods and services. Discussions were held about creating new opportunities for U.S. workers and firms, promoting a strong recovery and more balanced growth of the global economy by promoting more home-grown, consumption-led growth in China and working together to reduce fossil fuel subsidies.

At the 2011 meeting, according to Secretary Geithner, "the three key objectives on the U.S. side were to encourage the ongoing transformation of the Chinese economy away from its export-

dependent growth model of the past to a more balanced growth strategy led by domestic demand; to encourage China to level the competitive playing field between U.S. and Chinese companies, both in China and around the world; and to strengthen our engagement with China on financial reform issues in both countries.

China outlined in its Five-Year Plan a comprehensive set of reforms, again, to shift its growth strategy away from one relying on exports to “domestic demand.”

Although China needs economic growth to spur its development, there are increasing concerns about the negative impacts on resources and the environment. Another concern that is being addressed by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, is the wide income gap between urban and rural areas. By some estimates, more than 40 million farmers have been displaced from their land for economic development, contributing to thousands of demonstrations annually. For much of the population, living standards have greatly improved, but rural areas remain poor.

## People and Culture

Chinese culture is unique not only from the perspective of Western countries, but also from the perspective of other Asian countries. During the course of its long history, China has created its own language (including calligraphy), instruments and music, painting, philosophy, religion, medicine, architecture, and cooking. Despite these cultural differences, Peace Corps Volunteers continually report that one of the most positive aspects of their service in China is experiencing the warmth and friendliness of the Chinese people.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and China and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it. If you do not have access to the Internet, visit your local library. Libraries offer free Internet usage and often let you print information to take home.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experience, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

### General Information About China

[www.countrywatch.com/](http://www.countrywatch.com/)

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in the Beijing to how to convert from the dollar to the Yuan. Just click on China and go from there.

[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations)

Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

The State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find China and learn more about its social and political history. You can also go to the site's international travel section to check on conditions that may affect your safety.

**[www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm)**

This includes links to all the official sites for governments worldwide.

**[www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm](http://www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm)**

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

**[www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp)**

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

**[www.worldinformation.com](http://www.worldinformation.com)**

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries around the world.

### **Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees**

**[www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org)**

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “Friends of” groups for most countries of service, comprised of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups that frequently get together for social events and local volunteer activities.

**[www.PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org](http://www.PeaceCorpsWorldwide.org)**

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.



## Online Articles/Current News Sites About China

### **[www.chineseculture.about.com](http://www.chineseculture.about.com)**

This site offers general information on China and a news section that is updated daily.

### **[www1.chinadaily.com.cn/news/index.html](http://www1.chinadaily.com.cn/news/index.html)**

This online news site, published in both English and Chinese, includes links to several English language newspapers in China.

### **<http://search.asia.com/China>**

This site features a little of everything about China and a good list of links to other China-related sites.

### **[www.scmp.com](http://www.scmp.com)**

This is the site of the *South China Morning Post*, one of Hong Kong's English language newspapers.

### **[www.feer.com](http://www.feer.com)**

This is the site of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

### **<http://globalnytimes.com>**

This is the site of the *International Herald Tribune: The Global Edition of the New York Times*.

## International Development Sites

### About China

### **[www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org](http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org)**

This website of an independent publication established in 1996 to report on aid to China highlights the work of international and Chinese nongovernmental organizations.

### **[www.china-un.org/eng](http://www.china-un.org/eng)**

This is the website of China's mission to the United Nations.

## **[www.adb.org/china](http://www.adb.org/china)**

This is the China section of the Asian Development Bank, a multilateral development finance institution dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific.

## **Recommended Books**

1. Gittings, John. *The Changing Face of China: From Mao to Market*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
2. Hu Wenzhong. *Encountering the Chinese: A Guide for Americans*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 1999.
3. Jang Chung. *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*. New York: Anchor Books, 1992.
4. Salzman, Mark. *Iron and Silk*. New York: Vintage Books, 1987.
5. Spence, Jonathan D. *The Search for Modern China*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.
6. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2001.
7. Hessler, Peter. *Oracle Bones*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2007.
8. Hessler, Peter. *Country Driving*. Harper, 2011.
9. Wong, Jan. *Red China Blues*. New York: Anchor Books, 1997.
10. Chang, Leslie. *Factory Girls*. Spiegel & Grau, 2009.
11. Levy, Michael. *Chinese Kosher*. Holt, 2011.
12. Shirk, Susan. *China, Fragile Super Power*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
13. Watts, Jonathan. *When a Billion Chinese Jump*. Scribner, 2010.

14. Meyer, Michael. *The Last Days of Old Beijing*. Walker and Company, 2009.
15. Gifford, Rob. *China Road*. New York: Random House, 2007.

#### Books about the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.
4. Meisler, Stanley. *When the World Calls: The Inside Story of the Peace Corps and its First 50 Years*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2011.

#### Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.

6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*.  
Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).

# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE

## Communications

### Mail

Mail takes a minimum of 10 days to arrive in China from the United States. Some mail may not arrive (fortunately, this is rare) or may arrive after having been opened. Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to include “Airmail” on their envelopes.

Your address for the first two months (i.e., during pre-service training) will be:

“Your Name”  
U.S.-China Friendship Volunteers  
Sichuan University – Mail Box 278  
No. 29 Wang Jiang Road  
Chengdu, Sichuan 610064  
China (PRC)

You should limit the number of packages sent to the above address during pre-service training. Do not have packages sent that will be difficult for you to move to your site or expensive for you to mail within China. Wait until you know what your permanent site address will be and then have your packages sent directly there. Trainees will be responsible for picking up their own packages at the PC office. Packages received during training will not be forwarded to your permanent site.

### Telephones

Communicating by telephone in China is relatively easy and inexpensive. Each Volunteer must have a telephone, either a land-line in his/her apartment or a cell phone, and the basic cost for a phone line is included in the monthly living allowance. Long-distance telephone service is generally good, with connections available to most parts of the world without major delays. If you are calling from outside a major city, it may take longer for access

to an open line. Overseas operators speak and understand basic English and should have little difficulty placing a call. AT&T, MCI, and Sprint direct-dial operators can be reached from Chengdu and from many other sites by dialing a local number. Domestic direct-dial long-distance calls are also very easy. Calls to China can be placed inexpensively using calling cards, often for about 2 cents a minute. Most Volunteers also use local cards that are widely available and cost about 10 cents a minute. Many Volunteers use Skype or other VOIP options to make and receive calls from inside and outside China.

### **Computer, Internet, and Email Access**

All Peace Corps/China Volunteers will have access to email and the Internet, although connections can be weak or sporadic. Although some Volunteers will have access from home, others use department offices or Internet cafes near their school's campus. It is the responsibility of the Volunteer to set up and pay for any Internet service. Funds are provided in the living allowance for limited Internet usage. If you decide to bring a computer or any other expensive electronic equipment, we strongly recommend you purchase personal property insurance.

### **Housing and Site Location**

Volunteer sites in China are located from within Chengdu, where the Peace Corps office is located, to up to 1,200 kilometers (744 miles) away. Many Volunteers live on the campus of the college/university to which they are assigned and the school provides housing. All sites have hot water heaters for showering. However, in the winter, there is an occasional water shortage when water may not be available for hours at a time. Electricity is fairly constant, but power failures do occur, especially in winter. Volunteers live in local faculty housing or in apartments. These residences have a living room, bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, and sometimes a study.

## **Living Allowance and Money Management**

All Volunteers will receive a living allowance that is designed to allow them to live modestly by the standards of the people they serve, yet not in a manner that would endanger their health or safety. The current monthly living allowance is 1,410 Yuan (equivalent to about \$220). The allowance is intended to cover the purchase of food, replacement clothing, local entertainment and travel, phone line connection, and other incidental expenses.

You also receive the equivalent of \$24 per month for leave allowance, which is paid on the same schedule as the living allowance. You will be separately reimbursed for official travel (Peace Corps conferences, medical checkups, etc.). As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you are not allowed to accept any other paying positions during your term, nor can you accept bonus payments or expensive gifts from schools or other amounts from individuals or institutions. Any secondary projects, such as tutoring or giving lectures, must be done without compensation.

If you need to receive money from the U.S. while in China, a debit card tied to a U.S. account is the easiest way. Amounts can be deposited into the account in the U.S. and you can then withdraw the funds directly in local currency at your site. Credit cards are rarely accepted in most parts of China, but can be of use for travel while on leave.

## **Food and Diet**

Chinese food varies greatly from the Cantonese-style food that is typically found in major cities in the United States. Sichuan, Chongqing, and Guizhou dishes are much spicier and may take some getting used to, though mild dishes are also available. Gansu dishes are milder.

The staple in Sichuan, Chongqing, and Guizhou is rice. Pork is also served at almost every meal. Although vegetables abound, eating in restaurants can be difficult for vegetarians because meat is often mixed in with dishes featuring tofu or vegetables. The staple in Gansu is noodles, and beef and mutton are the major meats. Sichuan and Chongqing dishes also tend to be oily.

Cooking your own food is cheaper and healthier than eating in restaurants. Every Volunteer in China has access to a kitchen with a refrigerator and a stovetop.

## **Transportation**

Daily travel in many parts of China, including many, but not all, of the areas where Volunteers serve, is often by bicycle. Although Peace Corps/China does not provide bicycles, many Volunteers use them as their regular means of transportation. The Peace Corps requires each Volunteer to wear a bicycle helmet and will issue one if needed. You are not allowed to drive any motorized vehicle during your service in China or when you travel to other countries where there is a Peace Corps program. You are not allowed to ride on the back of motorcycles or other motorized vehicles.

Buses and minibuses are also a common form of transportation, and bus service is available within and among all cities and small towns. Bus transportation, due to the poor condition of some roads, lack of regular vehicle maintenance, and schedule changes, is not always reliable, so contingency planning is important. Taxi service via cars is available in every city.

Long-distance travel occurs by air or by train. Although there is regular air service to most cities in China, official travel is almost always by train. Train service is reliable and there are sleeper car options for overnight trips.

## **Geography and Climate**

China is subject to extremes in weather, from bitterly cold to unbearably hot. All Volunteer sites are cold in the winter, and several weeks of sustained temperatures in the 25- to 38-degree Fahrenheit range can be uncomfortable for Americans used to central heating. Although some heat is provided, rooms will be cooler than some people prefer. Also, Chinese generally believe that artificial heat and closed-in areas are unhealthy. Be prepared to wear several layers of clothing, especially when away from your residence (including when you are teaching because classrooms are unheated). Summers in western China, on the other



hand, can be hot and humid, with temperatures reaching into the 90s for many days. Most Volunteers' apartments have air conditioners and some classrooms have electric fans, but the heat can be challenging for some people.

## **Social Activities**

The Chinese are generally friendly and pleasant people, but it is sometimes difficult for foreigners to integrate into Chinese society. Until fairly recently, social contact between Chinese and most foreigners was limited to business relationships. Despite the increased opportunities for interaction, because of markedly different expectations about friendship roles, it can be challenging to become friends with a Chinese person in a way that Americans typically define friendship. Intimate relationships between Chinese and foreigners, depending on the nature of the relationship, the location, and the parties involved, can be sensitive and potentially controversial.

Life in western China is generally much slower than life in the United States. Current Volunteers recommend taking the initiative in joining activities outside of work, such as learning Chinese calligraphy, kung fu, mah-jongg, or the board game Go (weiqi); joining a sports club; or inviting friends and colleagues to go out for karaoke. Your Volunteer experience will be much richer and fulfilling if you readily look for cultural-sharing opportunities at your site.

## **Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior**

Great importance is likely to be attached to neatness and proper dress, particularly in professional fields. Volunteers should dress suitably both on and off the job and respect host country and community attitudes toward personal appearance. Based on accepted norms for teachers in China, Peace Corps/China has adopted a dress and appearance code for Volunteers, which is required during pre-service training, teaching time, office hours, important social activities, and while visiting the Peace Corps office in Chengdu. When participating in athletic activities, you are encouraged to wear modest sports clothes.

Appropriate dress includes collared shirts (not T-shirts) and pants for men (short-sleeve shirts are recommended for summer); blouses, knee-length skirts, dresses, or dress slacks for women; and sturdy sandals or closed shoes (not rubber thongs). To meet Chinese expectations, teachers must dress conservatively. No hats should be worn during sessions or while teaching; no earrings for men and only one earring in each lobe for women; no body piercings for men or women; and any tattoos must be kept covered at all times. Male teachers are expected to have neat hair. Thus, short haircuts that are neat and well-kept are required. Short shorts, revealing or tight clothing, military-style clothing, spaghetti straps, or flip-flops should not be worn. Walking shorts (knee length) or culottes, clean jeans and T-shirts, and sandals are acceptable casual dress.

### **Use of Alcohol**

Peace Corps/China has a policy regarding the use of alcohol by Volunteers and staff. That policy requires moderation in consumption and holds Volunteers and staff responsible for behavior that could harm the reputation of the Peace Corps, disrespect local cultural traditions, or compromise the personal health and safety of Volunteers or staff. Should you have personal concerns about the issue of alcohol use and your interest in being assigned as a Volunteer to China, please feel free to discuss this with your recruiter, the China country desk officer, or a Peace Corps medical staff member.

### **Websites and Blogs**

Volunteers and trainees who create their own websites, or post information to websites that have been created and maintained by others, should be reminded that (unless password-protected) any information posted on the Internet can probably be accessed by the general public, even if that is not intended. They are responsible for discussing the content in advance with the country director to ensure that the material is suitable and complies with general guidelines, as well as any country-specific guidance. Volunteers and trainees are responsible for ensuring that their IT use meets Peace Corps general guidelines.

## Photographs

Volunteers are required to take extreme care in taking, or avoid taking, photographs of what are clearly or could be perceived as sensitive areas, including, but not limited to, military installations, government buildings, police stations, airports, and airplanes. If you are unsure, it is safer to refrain from taking the photograph.

## Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the "Health Care and Safety" chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most China Volunteers complete their two years of service without incident. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in China. Using these tools, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Each staff member at the Peace Corps is committed to providing Volunteers with the support they need to successfully meet the challenges they will face to have a safe, healthy, and productive service. We encourage Volunteers and families to look at our safety and security information on the Peace Corps website at [www.peacecorps.gov/safety](http://www.peacecorps.gov/safety).

Information on these pages gives messages on Volunteer health and Volunteer safety. There is a section titled "Safety and Security—Our Partnership." Among topics addressed are the risks of

serving as a Volunteer, posts' safety support systems, and emergency planning and communications.

## Rewards and Frustrations

Serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer may be the most rewarding thing you do in your life, and living in China is likely to be an extraordinary experience. But many Westerners find that they have to adjust to living in China, and that day-to-day life here presents some challenges.

Not feeling accepted by Chinese is a common experience. Staring, name-calling (e.g., *waiguoren* or *laowai*), and seemingly impolite shouts of "Hello!" followed by giggling are all things you may face on a daily basis. This is by no means considered acceptable behavior by most Chinese, but at times it may seem that way. Although staring is unnerving to most Americans, it is not meant to be offensive. In China, it is OK to stare intensely at anything or anyone. This can be a source of frustration and even friction as you begin to feel more integrated into Chinese culture. You may always stand out in a crowd, so you will have little of the anonymity you might enjoy in other places where you are unknown. You might be asked very personal questions (e.g., about your age, weight, or income) by Chinese, but that is a way for them to show a friendly interest in you. The American desire for privacy is not always understood and, therefore, not often honored. At some campuses, officials have keys to on-campus housing and may feel free to enter your apartment to check on things while you are out.

Casual dating is not common and is discouraged. High school students are forbidden to have a boyfriend or girlfriend, and relationships between college students are everyone's business. Serious dating is noticed because of the general lack of privacy. Because gaining a bad reputation in China can destroy a young woman's relationship with her family, a Westerner who wants to date a Chinese must realize that such dating is a delicate matter for the Chinese person involved.

Volunteers may become frustrated with aspects of Chinese cities, such as a seeming lack of traffic regulations, restrooms, and other

public facilities that do not meet expected standards of cleanliness, and a general lack of building and equipment maintenance.

# PEACE CORPS TRAINING

## Overview of Pre-Service Training

Your first weeks in-country will be an intense period of transition. It may be your first time outside of the United States. Regardless of your background and experience, you will be making a leap of faith and putting yourself in the hands of several individuals whose job is to prepare you for Peace Corps service. During pre-service training, all trainees live with host families. Many individuals find this experience to be the best part of their training. Host families provide invaluable lessons in cross-cultural and language areas that Peace Corps staff cannot begin to teach. Some Volunteers remain close to their host families throughout their service and spend some Chinese holidays and vacations with them.

Pre-service training is designed to provide you with the tools necessary to operate independently and effectively as a Peace Corps Volunteer in China. You will participate in a structured learning situation that is center-based with a host family component. You will be required to attend all training sessions, learn and demonstrate proficiency in the language, and observe cultural mores. Your progress will be assessed by others, but you will also be asked to take responsibility for your own learning and to gradually decrease your reliance on the Peace Corps training and office staff. You will be encouraged to assess your own progress, as well as your commitment to serving in Peace Corps/China for the next two years.

Pre-service training consists of language instruction; cross-cultural orientation; job-specific technical training; orientation to China's institutional processes; health, medical, and safety orientation; and orientation to Peace Corps policies. The particular design of the training depends on the size and makeup of your group. PST will not give you everything it takes to be a successful Peace Corps Volunteer. Volunteer service is a process and requires continual learning and application of what is learned. Even though pre-service training is a good foundation, what you bring in terms of knowledge, skills, experience, and motivation, combined with

what you acquire during PST, will determine the quality of your experience as a Volunteer.

### Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in China by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Chinese experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the general economic and political environment in China and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Chinese agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

### **TEFL Training**

Technical training, which will be teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), will prepare you to work in China by building on the skills you already have and by helping you to develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs and issues of the country. The Peace Corps staff and current Volunteers will conduct this component of the training program, which places great emphasis on learning how to become an effective TEFL teacher in a Chinese classroom setting. The core of technical training is a model school practicum with Chinese students. Former Volunteers have said this is the hardest yet most rewarding experience of technical training.

You will be supported by experienced Chinese trainers, current Volunteers, and Peace Corps staff throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you will need to undertake your work as a TEFL teacher and be a productive member of your community.

### Language Training

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is at the heart of the training program. You must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Chinese language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week in small groups of four to five people.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so you can practice and develop language skills further once you are at your site. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your service.

You will be provided guidelines on how to effectively design, implement, and monitor an individualized learning program, as well as how to identify a suitable tutor and negotiate a reasonable rate during your two years of service. This policy attempts to provide the maximum possible flexibility to Volunteers to determine how to best meet their language needs.

### Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Chinese host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families go through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in China. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a



facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, non-formal and adult education strategies, and political structures.

### Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive health care and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in China. Nutrition, mental health, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

### Safety Training

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

There will be extensive training in the Peace Corps/China emergency action plan to familiarize you with procedures during any emergency.

### Additional Trainings during Volunteer Service

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- In-service training: *Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development*

*skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.*

- Midterm conference (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): *Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.*
- Close-of-service conference: *Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.*

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

## YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN CHINA

The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in China maintains a clinic with a full-time medical officer, who takes care of Volunteers' primary health care needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in China at local hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

### Health Issues in China

Living abroad can be a significant life-changing experience and requires taking care of both physical and mental health. The Peace Corps/China preventive health care program includes immunizations for hepatitis A and B, rabies, Japanese encephalitis, typhoid, influenza, meningitis, diphtheria and tetanus, polio, and mumps, measles, and rubella. If you have had any of these immunizations, please bring documentation from the providers who administered the vaccines. Without such documentation, the Peace Corps must give you the vaccines again to ensure that you are properly immunized. These immunizations are not optional.

Avian influenza is endemic among the fowl population of Southeast Asia and south and southwestern China. Although there have been no confirmed cases of human-to-human transmission of avian influenza, the World Health Organization (WHO) believes the spread of infection could evolve suddenly to include human-to-human transmission. WHO is monitoring the situation very closely in Vietnam, Indonesia, and Egypt where most cases have occurred to-date. Peace Corps/China and other Peace Corps programs in Asia provide Tamiflu as a precaution. You should avoid contact with any types of birds, including chickens, ducks, and pigeons, to minimize risk of exposure to avian influenza. You

should avoid all poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. Peace Corps headquarters will continue to monitor avian influenza and will keep the post advised.

## **Helping You Stay Healthy**

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in China, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as the Peace Corps will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in China will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in China, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

## **Maintaining Your Health**

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage “An ounce of prevention ...” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of

the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in China is to take the following preventive measures:

**Stress.** Successful strategies for stress management include exercise, writing, listening to or playing music, talking to peers, and reading.

**Respiratory infections.** Viral upper respiratory infections (the common cold) often occur. To prevent them, you are encouraged to get enough sleep, maintain good eating habits, not smoke, get a moderate amount of exercise, practice stress management, and wash your hands frequently. Also, do not share a dish (using chopsticks) with someone who has a cold.

**Diarrhea.** Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in China during pre-service training. It is also important to pay close attention to the sanitary conditions of restaurants, wash your hands frequently, and carry potable water with you at all times.

**Air Pollution.** China has many of the world's most polluted cities and it is likely your site will be in such a city. It is important to be honest with the Peace Corps about any history you may have of asthma, reactive airway disease, or other respiratory conditions that could be affected by high levels of air pollution.

**Dental problems.** The best way to avoid broken fillings, receding gums, and other dental problems is to maintain a regular regimen of brushing and flossing correctly. Always check rice that you eat or prepare for foreign bodies such as small pebbles.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in China during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let the medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

### **Women's Health Information**

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention but also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

If feminine hygiene products are not available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in China will provide them. If you require a specific product, please bring a three-month supply with you.

## Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

### Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandages

Adhesive tape

*American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook*

Antacid tablets (Tums)

Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)

Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)

Band-Aids

Butterfly closures

Calamine lotion

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms

Dental floss

Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)

Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)

Iodine tablets (for water purification)

Lip balm (Chapstick)

Oral rehydration salts

Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)

Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)

Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)

Scissors

Sterile gauze pads

Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)

Tinactin (antifungal cream)

Tweezers

### **Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist**

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office to obtain a copy of your immunization record and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in China. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills during your service. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such



as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace them, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in health care plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary health care from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service health care benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

## Safety and Security—Our Partnership

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property theft and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems.

Beyond knowing that Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you, it might be helpful to see how this partnership works. Peace Corps has policies, procedures, and training in place to promote your safety. We depend on you to follow those policies and to put into practice what you have learned. An example of how this works in practice—in this case to help manage the risk of burglary—is:

- Peace Corps assesses the security environment where you will live and work
- Peace Corps inspects the house where you will live according to established security criteria
- Peace Corps provides you with resources to take measures such as installing new locks
- Peace Corps ensures you are welcomed by host country authorities in your new community
- Peace Corps responds to security concerns that you raise
- You lock your doors and windows
- You adopt a lifestyle appropriate to the community where you live
- You get to know neighbors
- You decide if purchasing personal articles insurance is appropriate for you
- You don't change residences before being authorized by Peace Corps

- You communicate concerns that you have to Peace Corps staff

This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety that all include important safety and security information to help you understand this partnership. The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify, reduce, and manage the risks you may encounter.

#### **Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk**

There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control. By far the most common crime that Volunteers experience is theft. Thefts often occur when Volunteers are away from their sites, in crowded locations (such as markets or on public transportation), and when leaving items unattended.

Before you depart for China there are several measures you can take to reduce your risk:

- Leave valuable objects in U.S.
- Leave copies of important documents and account numbers with someone you trust in the U.S.
- Purchase a hidden money pouch or "dummy" wallet as a decoy
- Purchase personal articles insurance

After you arrive in China, you will receive more detailed information about common crimes, factors that contribute to

Volunteer risk, and local strategies to reduce that risk. For example, Volunteers in China learn to:

- Choose safe routes and times for travel, and travel with someone trusted by the community whenever possible
- Make sure one's personal appearance is respectful of local customs
- Avoid high-crime areas
- Know the local language to get help in an emergency
- Make friends with local people who are respected in the community
- Limit alcohol consumption

As you can see from this list, you must be willing to work hard and adapt your lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target for crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in China. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that place you at risk and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally are less likely to steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions in large towns are favorite worksites for pickpockets.

The following are other security concerns in China of which you should be aware:

Most pick pocketing has occurred while Volunteers were traveling or shopping near their sites. Prevention requires extreme vigilance when on public transportation and Volunteers should utilize an inside money pouch or money belt. Theft from Volunteer lodgings has occurred, but is uncommon. Making sure your windows are secure and always locking your door is usually sufficient to protect against such theft. It is not wise to display expensive items, such as computers, cameras, or CD players, when you have visitors.

While whistles and exclamations may be fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, abide by local cultural norms, and respond according to the training you will receive.

### **Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime**

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. You can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your home is secure, and develop relationships in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. While the factors that contribute to your risk in China may be different, in many ways you can do what you would do if you moved to a new city anywhere: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in China will require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

### **Support from Staff**

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff response may include reassessing the Volunteer's worksite and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the

process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant; this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

## **Crime Data for China**

Crime data and statistics for China, which are updated yearly, are available at the following link:  
<http://www.peacecorps.gov/countrydata/china>

Please take the time to review this important information.

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of serious crimes and crimes that do occur overseas are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities through the local courts system. If you are the victim of a crime, you will decide if you wish to pursue prosecution. If you decide to prosecute, the Peace Corps will be there to assist you. One of our tasks is to ensure you are fully informed of your options and understand how the local legal process works. The Peace Corps will help you ensure your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country.

If you are the victim of a serious crime, you will learn how to get to a safe location as quickly as possible and contact your Peace Corps office. It's important that you notify Peace Corps staff as soon as you can so the Peace Corps can provide you with the help you need.

## **Volunteer Safety Support in China**

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. China's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/China office will keep you informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, you will be contacted through the emergency communication network. An important component of the capacity of Peace Corps to keep you informed is your buy-in to the partnership concept with the Peace Corps staff. It is expected that you will do your part in ensuring that Peace Corps staff members are kept apprised of your movements in-country so they are able to inform you.

**Volunteer training** will include sessions on specific safety and security issues in China. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural aspects, health, and other components of training. You will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas, including safety and security, as a condition of service.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and worksites. Site selection is based, in part, on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/China's **detailed emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of

civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, you will gather with other Volunteers in China at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers immediately report any security incident to the Peace Corps office. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

## DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES

In fulfilling its mandate to share the face of America with host countries, the Peace Corps is making special efforts to assure that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent history. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In China, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in China.



Outside of the largest east coast cities, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical American behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of China are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in China, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

## **Overview of Diversity in China**

The Peace Corps staff in China recognizes the adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

## **What Might a Volunteer Face?**

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Some female Volunteers in China have experienced “body image” issues relative to the Chinese cultural definition of ideal feminine beauty. Few Western women are small or thin enough to achieve that narrow ideal, which may be frustrating for some Volunteers, as is the possibility that their attractiveness may be defined by this standard. Additionally, despite the outward appearance that women are equal to men in China, women still struggle to be considered and treated as true equals in the workplace.

### **Volunteer Comment**

“While people’s attitudes toward gender roles are changing, traditional views still prevail. The differential gender treatment can be frustrating, especially because you view yourself as equal in your relationships but some Chinese do not. For example, a man may be assumed to be the better teacher (and asked to teach more classes), be asked to participate more in sports, be invited to more social gatherings, be asked for his opinion more often, and receive equal credit for projects or activities a woman did by herself.”

### **Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color**

It is difficult to generalize about how Chinese may perceive Volunteers of color. Americans of Asian descent will have a very different experience than those of African descent, who will have a very different experience than those of Hispanic descent. Still, some Volunteers of color may be evaluated as less professionally competent than white Volunteers and may not be perceived as being North American. Asian Americans may be identified more by their cultural heritage than by their American citizenship. Current or historical Chinese relations with other Asian countries, such as Korea or Japan, may have an impact on how Asian-American Volunteers are perceived. Additionally, Asian Americans may have to deal with people's higher expectations of their language-learning ability or cross-cultural adaptability.

A Volunteer of color may be the only minority trainee or Volunteer in his or her group or may be working and living with individuals with no experience or understanding of their background.

## Volunteer Comments

“As an Asian American, I find my experiences of living in China to be quite different from those of many Peace Corps Volunteers. For instance, when I walk out in the streets, I do not get stared at or called *laowai* (foreigner). Actually, many of the people in my community think I am one of them. Because I am Chinese, they feel closer to me and, thus, it is much easier for me to make friends. The question of whether or not I can use chopsticks is rarely asked. Moreover, I am quite familiar with Chinese culture, and I also have prior knowledge of Mandarin. These advantages have allowed me to further understand the Chinese part of myself. Every day that I am in China, I realize how Chinese I am in some ways and how American I am in others. This has had a profound affect on my search for the Chinese-American identity that I have been struggling with.”

“Living in China, I do have my ups and downs. Being away from home for such a long time was one major obstacle I had to overcome. Even though I still miss my family and friends, I realize that the Peace Corps staff and the Volunteers are a great support group. Even though I had prior knowledge of Mandarin, I was still not able to communicate with locals because the people here speak their own dialect, Sichuanese. They may understand me when I speak standard Mandarin, but when they respond, I look at them with a confused face because I have no idea what they are talking about. Sometimes I even get mad because the local dialect is spoken so harshly, like they are yelling at me. After being here for almost six months, I am becoming more familiar with the Sichuan dialect, and I regard their loud voices as their normal speaking tone.

“The greatest part about being Chinese American in China is my ability to share my own unique culture with my students and my peers. They are extremely interested in me—my ability to speak English as well as Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), my life in America, and my Chinese-American culture. It feels great to be able to share that part of me with them. It is also very fulfilling to know that I am opening their eyes and allowing them to see that not all Americans are blond with blue eyes—that America is, in fact, very diverse.”

### Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

The Chinese people pay great respect to age. As a senior Volunteer, you may not experience some of the issues that younger Volunteers face because of the appreciation for seniors in Chinese culture. However, senior Volunteers may not receive adequate personal support from younger Volunteers and may feel inclined not to participate fully in order to “give the young folks their turn.” Additionally, senior Volunteers may be more reluctant to share personal, sexual, or health concerns with other Volunteers.

If learning Chinese is difficult for senior Volunteers, they are encouraged to develop an effective individual approach to language learning in and after PST.

### **Volunteer Comments**

“One of the biggest issues I faced as a senior Volunteer came early during pre-service training. I had just sold my car and home, had closed my business, and, like everyone, was taking on the challenge of becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer. But I was doing it at a different point in my life than most of the people in my group. I have to admit there were times when I just longed to talk to someone with some miles on them, if you know what I mean.

“Another big issue for me was my difficulty with learning the language. I had never learned another language before. I was the slowest in the group and often felt stupid. My ancient brain just struggled to learn and retain enough for daily survival tasks, and that was hard. I was accustomed to thinking of myself as a competent businesswoman with a pretty good brain, but now I felt so inadequate and embarrassed in front of my younger classmates. Of course, they never made fun of me, but I worried that I would be seen as that old woman who can't seem to get even the simplest language phrases. I was my own worst enemy with this. During this experience, it would have been nice to talk with another older person who might also be struggling so that we could both laugh about how our brains just blank out and give us those senior moments.

“Now that I’m at my site, I find my biggest lesson is in learning to be dependent. I have lived alone since I was 24 and prided myself in being able to take care of myself. Now I must ask for help almost daily as I try to communicate and be OK with accepting it when it’s offered. That’s a big adjustment for me. So if you have become accustomed to functioning quite competently in the United States as an independent person, it could be hard to allow yourself to be dependent. I’m still uncomfortable with it, but I’m working on it. Of course, I’ve also gotten myself a Chinese language tutor who is willing to patiently spend two hours twice a week with me.

“But don’t let what I have said here stop you from coming. I’m delighted that I am here in China to offer my life experience and continue to live and learn. By the way, China values age and that’s a neat feeling. For the first time in my life, people now frequently carry things for me, and I’ve yet to have to stand on a crowded bus. I’ve discovered that people really do want to help and are really happy to give. So now I’m practicing learning how to graciously receive and just say ‘Xie Xie (thank you).’

“There is some truth to the belief in China that age confers wisdom. I have found myself often consulted by teachers and students while the younger Volunteers are ignored. One good aspect of this is that the teachers are more willing to be your friends in a social sense because they see you as a peer, not a younger, inexperienced person. I can also get away with more joking and kidding than a ‘junior’ Volunteer.

“Another consideration is that senior Volunteers constitute a small portion of the total number of Volunteers, so having a senior Volunteer as a friend may be difficult. The question of loneliness must be faced, and you must consider what coping skills you have in this area.”

“In my first 31/2 months in China, one thing often deflated my self-esteem—the Chinese cultural trait of respect for the elderly. I was continually confronted by Chinese insisting that I take their seat on the bus, that they carry my packages or books, or that I be careful getting into and out of a car or stepping off the curb or down a step. I am a lively, agile 73-year-old retired infantry

airborne soldier and PE teacher, and I have had some comical and stimulating encounters by refusing to adhere to this particular Chinese custom. Many times, I will retaliate by offering a seat on the bus to a female Chinese. That stumps them.

“Other than that, I have had no problems as a senior Volunteer and am enjoying and looking forward to whatever they throw at me here in this vast sea of people, half of whom seem to be always cooking food and the other half of whom seem to be eating food.”

#### Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Generally speaking, the Chinese culture does not accept or understand homosexuality or bisexuality and can be extremely prejudicial. Gay Volunteers grapple with the question of whether they can confide in host country friends, but usually do not. There may or may not be sufficient support for a homosexual or bisexual lifestyle within Peace Corps/China. Gay Volunteers might serve for two years without meeting another gay Volunteer or staff member. Lesbians will have to deal with constant questions about boyfriends, marriage, and sex (as do all women).

Most Volunteers are posted in cities that are less open than the large cities along the coast of China. Relationships with homosexual host country nationals can happen, but as with all cross-cultural relationships, they are not likely to be easy. AIDS has only recently become an issue in the local news and is terribly misunderstood as a disease widely contagious among homosexual or bisexual people.

#### **Volunteer Comment**

“For me, the intolerance in China is most difficult to handle at the personal level. I can accept that it is inappropriate for me to follow up the inevitable ‘Do you have a boyfriend?’ question with ‘No,

but I do have a girlfriend!’ I can accept that it is not my place in the community to ‘take on’ traditional Chinese values and replace them with my own. What is much more difficult for me to accept, however, is that I cannot share a significant part of my life with a trusted host country national friend. When my friend pours her heart out to me about her love life, I can’t relate to what she says with experiences of my own. When she promises to set me up with a Chinese boyfriend, I cannot explain that I am already quite happy with my girlfriend, thank you. The decision not to share your sexuality with close friends can greatly contribute to the loneliness and feelings of misunderstanding that already come with adapting to a new culture.”

#### Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

Although there are some churches in China, all of the services are in Chinese. Peace Corps Volunteers in China are free to practice their religion but not to proselytize to the Chinese, as it is against Chinese law and Peace Corps policy. Previous Volunteers have advised active believers to bring their own holy books and religious readings and to be prepared to worship alone. Most members of the Chinese younger generation (under 50) are non-believers, and you should not be surprised if the students tell you that all religions are superstition and they want no part of it. Conversely, do not be surprised if you are asked curious questions by students regarding the religious significance of major holidays or questions about the Bible.

Although all religions suffered enormous setbacks during the Cultural Revolution, the majority of believers are Buddhists. There is a Muslim minority (the largest minority in China), mostly in northwest China, and Sichuan does have a number of Islamic mosques.

#### **Volunteer Comment**

“A while back, three of my best students came to me during my office hours and asked me about the difference between religion and superstition. It’s tough to explain, I said. One person’s religion

is another person's superstition. They told me that all superstitions were outlawed in China because in the past people had been exploited and abused as a result of superstitious beliefs. 'Many people,' one student said, 'would go to a faith healer and get medicine for a sick relative. The healer would just take a bowl of water and say words into the bowl. Words have energy, they believed, and the energy in the healer's words turned the water into medicine. They paid a lot of money for this, and a lot of sick people died because they didn't get the care they needed. That's why superstition is not allowed in China.'

"Many of Christianity's most sacred tenets do seem silly and irrational to an outside observer. If your Christian faith means a lot to you, you may very well be extremely offended if you ever discuss the topic with your students. Most of them have been raised with the idea that religion is a superstition, and it's hard for them to get past that. As with so many things about living in Sichuan, a healthy sense of perspective and a good dose of patience are priceless in helping you deal with situations like these."

#### Possible Issues for Volunteers with Disabilities

As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, to perform a full tour of Volunteer service in China without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service. The Peace Corps/China staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in training, housing, jobsites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.

As a disabled Volunteer in China, you may face a special set of challenges. In China, as in other parts of the world, some people hold prejudicial attitudes about individuals with disabilities and may discriminate against them. Very little support exists within Chinese culture for anyone with disabilities, and Volunteers with



non-visible disabilities may encounter a lack of understanding, and therefore support, concerning their disability.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much luggage am I allowed to bring to China?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The Peace Corps' allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 100 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution.

What is the electric current in China?

China's residential electric system is 220 volts, 50 hertz.

Appliances and electronic equipment manufactured for the U.S. market are usually rated for 100 to 120 volts and 60 Hz. To use this equipment in China, you must have a step-down transformer (a device that lowers the incoming voltage of 220 to 240 volts to 110 to 120 volts). Most computers will run on both 110 and 220. Plug adapters are available in China.

How much money should I bring?

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. You will be given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover your expenses. Volunteers often wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are

preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

The easiest way to access funds from the U.S. while in China is through an ATM card tied to a checking or savings account. Although credit cards and traveler's checks can be used easily in some countries where you may travel for vacation, they are not widely accepted in China other than at major hotels in larger cities. It is also good idea to maintain your checking account in the United States and to bring your checkbook.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

Do I need an international driver's license?  
Volunteers in China do not need an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks, bicycles, and lots of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this can occur only with prior written permission from the country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. A U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

What should I bring as gifts for China friends and my host family?

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require a 10- to 12-hour drive from the capital. There is at least one Volunteer based in each of the regional capitals and about five to eight Volunteers in the capital city.

How can my family contact me in an emergency? The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580; select option 2, then extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at the above number. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

Can I call home from China?

Long-distance telephone service is generally good, with connections available to most parts of the world without major delays. If you are calling from outside a major city, it may take longer to get a line. Overseas operators speak and understand basic English and should have little difficulty placing a call. AT&T, MCI, and Sprint direct-dial operators can be reached from Chengdu and from many other sites by dialing a local number.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

A cell phone purchased in the U.S. may work in China if it is a triband GSM (including 900/1800 MHz), accepts SIM cards, and can be unlocked to replace SIM cards as well as to change applications. Therefore, it is not practical to bring a cell phone from the United States. Many Volunteers choose to purchase one locally, and relatively inexpensive basic models are available. Peace Corps/China does not provide funds for the purchase or service contracts of personal cell phones, so those interested in a cell phone should plan on covering those costs. Peace Corps/China does, however, include in its living allowance the basic cost of maintaining a telephone connection, either for a landline or a cell phone.

Will there be email and Internet access?

Should I bring my computer?

All Peace Corps/China Volunteers will have access to email and the Internet, although connections can be weak or sporadic.

Although some Volunteers will have access from home, others use department offices or Internet cafes near their school's campus. It is the responsibility of the Volunteer to set up and pay for any home Internet service. Funds are provided in the living allowance for limited Internet usage.

## WELCOME LETTERS FROM CHINA VOLUNTEERS

As a Peace Corps Volunteer serving in China, I realize that my experience is very different from the image most people have of the typical Peace Corps placement. It definitely diverges from the “mud hut” image that is often associated with being a Volunteer. I am living in Chongqing, which is now one of the largest cities in China. I am teaching at a large university with opportunities to interact with both students and staff. I live in a modern apartment and enjoy the basic comforts afforded by the developing infrastructure. But this relative comfort does not reduce the importance of the work or the value of our efforts. I am teaching English, but on deeper level, I am developing relationships with my students that will affect their view of the world and America. Many of my students have never had an opportunity to talk to or get to know someone from outside of China.

Teaching at our university keeps us quite busy. My wife and I each teach six or more classes per week with preparation time and office hours filling our week. We are often asked to attend activities of the Foreign Language Club, to judge speech contests and debates, or offer a lecture at the weekly foreign teacher lecture series. On Thursday nights we have English Corner, which is an opportunity for students from all departments of the university to gather and practice their English. We enjoy this chance to meet students from other majors and hear their opinions and ideas. In addition to these activities, I have been working with the foreign language department to develop an online course management system for our classes. My wife Kate has a women's group that meets weekly and teaches some classes at a local primary school.

Even with our busy schedule, we are able to have some time for exploring our neighborhood and our city. We live in an area that has many hiking trails and old step roads. We love walking on the step roads, visiting the tea houses, and seeing the striking contrast of the old ways to the daily changing city with its constant construction and towering buildings. It is an amazing time to be in

China and a unique opportunity to work here as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

— John Granger, China 15 Volunteer, Chongqing

As a retired U.S. teacher of 30 years, my decision to apply for the Peace Corps was based on my love of teaching and my desire to travel to countries I had taught my students about during my teaching career. As a Peace Corps Volunteer I have taught university freshmen, sophomores, and juniors pronunciation, oral English, and listening and speaking. The students I teach are eager to improve their English skills and learn about life in America. In return they have taught me about their family lives and struggles they have gone through to get accepted to the university.

At the university there are many opportunities to be involved with students and help them with their English. I have office hours each week, attend English corner, judge speaking contests, and occasionally eat lunch or dinner with my students.

As a secondary project I teach two hours at the primary school each week. I have also started a volunteer program at the university where my college students sign up and come and help me at the primary school. This gives them the opportunity to see what it is like to be an English teacher in a primary school.

Because our experience has been so rewarding, my husband and I have decided to extend our service for a third year here in China. I think that you also will enjoy the opportunity to experience the culture and get to know many wonderful people.

— Kate Burrus, China 15 Volunteer, Chongqing

My experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in China has been more rewarding than I could have ever dreamed. Teaching in a city of 15 million people is anything but the “classic” Peace Corps experience, but the speed with which everything is developing and changing makes this one of the most exciting places to be! While



here, I have witnessed first-hand the delicate balance of embracing the future and all of its thrill, while maintaining reverence and space for the cultural traditions that have made China into this great mystery of a country.

I live in one of the largest cities that Volunteers serve in; however, even “small” cities can have over 300,000 people. So, when it comes to building relationships it is important to be creative about how you define community. Your students, Chinese colleagues, neighbors, and local restaurants and hangouts will become your community. You will learn to value the smiles and “hellos” you receive from your favorite fruit and vegetable sellers, and you will learn how to make yourself available to people in culturally appropriate ways. You will find the community in China will be different than what you are used to at home, but the more intentional and accessible you are, the more rewarding your time here will be.

As a foreign teacher in China, you receive instant credibility from your students and colleagues because you are the “English Expert.” This allows you to become more than just a teacher. You have the ability to teach not only English skills, but critical thinking and life skills that have the potential to have a great impact on the lives of your students. Teaching is a door into the lives of your students, who will automatically love you because you are a foreigner, but will respect and learn from you as you invite them to become a part of your life.

Many times when people decide to apply for Peace Corps it is because they think they have something to offer (an important part of Peace Corps). What is equally important to remember, however, is that you also have something to learn. Come to China as a sponge—porous enough to soak up as much as you can, and willing to spill your heart out.

— Chelsea Clarke, China 16 Volunteer, Sichuan

After being a Volunteer in Peace Corps/China for four years, I have had an adventure journeying through the wonder and

excitement of a new culture, enjoying the food, sights, and sounds of China and going from being a tourist to turning China into my home.

When you first arrive, training will be intense as you learn to navigate through language barriers and cultural differences. I remember my host mother showing me which direction to point toward when using a squat toilet. Having only taught math and science in Africa, I had never been taught how to teach English and the many hours in TEFL sessions prepared me for the Chinese classroom and education system. After 10 weeks of training, PC sent me to Gansu, a brown, dry, less developed province. I rode a 16-hour sleeper train and then a six-hour bus ride to a “rural” site. The population was huge at 300,000 and even though the city was only 10-by-5 blocks, it still felt somehow like a big city with tons of people in the streets, a public transportation system, a KFC around the corner, and Chinese pizza available at the western restaurant. A quick 15-minute bike ride and I would be in farmland.

Where will you live for the next two years? China. Yes, but China is huge and each site is unique. Will you be sent to dry Gansu, spicy Sichuan, metropolitan Chongqing, or green Guizhou? Most Volunteers work at colleges and universities and live in nice flats with many amenities. I have lived in both Gansu and Chengdu, where I had a full bed, a washing machine, a western toilet, a heater, AC, a computer, and Internet. In Gansu I had a 10-minute commute to my campus and in Chengdu I had a 45-minute bus commute to teach.

What will you teach? I taught college-level speaking, listening, Western culture, English songs, literature, a movie class, and writing, but it wasn’t the subjects that made my life memorable, it was the students. Through daily interactions outside of the classroom, I learned to see China through my students’ eyes. Meeting at an English Resource and Community Center, attending knitting club, participating in a women’s group, and cooking Chinese food with students, we used English to learn about each other. Many of my students were first generation college students, children of farmers, teachers, government employees, and migrant

workers. Not only was I learning from them, they were also having their eyes opened to new ideas and to the diversity of Americans.

As a Chinese American who identifies with the LGBT community, there were unique challenges. When I first walked into a classroom, students were initially disappointed that they weren't getting an American teacher. Local people couldn't understand why my Chinese was so poor. My Caucasian sitemates would get frustrated when no one would listen to them because the locals would turn to me thinking that I was their translator. After being free to love whomever I wanted and to be able to freely talk about LGBT issues, I had to return to the closet because the community wasn't accepting. People are afraid of being fired because they are gay and many of my closest Chinese friends think being gay is wrong.

In China we learn that we don't have much control over anything so the best attitude is to be flexible, to bend our ideas, and to accept things we don't understand, creating peace through friendships. You will have good days and bad days, frustrations and joys. You will impact your Chinese community and they will impact you as you grow as an individual. Welcome to China, a journey of great learning.

— Jennifer Popham, Ph.D., China 14 Volunteer Gansu and Sichuan

# PACKING LIST

This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in China and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that each experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything on the list, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in China.

## General Clothing

- Variety of socks (SmartWool, athletic, dress)
- Plenty of good-quality underwear and bras
- Two or three pairs of khakis and two/three pairs of comfortable pants for leisure and travel (with belts)
- Three to four business casual shirts (men should be clean shaven and wear collars and women should be modest showing no cleavage)
- One dressy outfit (a sports coat and a tie for men, a dress/skirt for women)
- A good raincoat (a light raincoat, since it rains more in the summer, but some PCVs prefer to use Chinese umbrellas)
- Two pairs of long underwear (two different weights)
- Winter coat, gloves, hat, and scarf (all can be bought/made in-country but not at all sites)
- Two to three heavy sweaters
- Two or three long-sleeved shirts for layering
- Shorts for sports/leisure
- Two to four casual shirts for travel/leisure (spandex is great since your clothes will stretch out)
- One or two easy-care skirts (not too short, at least knee-length)
- One or two short-sleeved or sleeveless dresses (no spaghetti straps) for summer
- One or two (no spaghetti straps) tank tops for summer
- Modest bathing suit

## Shoes

Note: Shoes are available in China, but only in smaller sizes (up to size 8 for women and up to size 9 for men). In addition, having at least one pair of waterproof shoes is a necessity for rain.

- One pair of sneakers (brand names are available locally, but not at American prices)
- One pair of dress shoes (sturdy, comfortable, warm for winter)
- One pair of sturdy sandals (leather is recommended) to wear in the warm season
- One pair of "casual" shoes

## Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- Deodorant (spray and aerosol can be found, but stick/gel is difficult)
- A three-month supply of any prescription drugs you take (to have while the medical office orders your medication)
- Contact lens solutions (available locally; note that the Peace Corps does not recommend wearing contact lenses, but most Volunteers who choose to, have been able to wear them. You should still bring two pairs of glasses)
- Any makeup, facial soaps, or lotions you use (most local products have whitening bleach in them); tampons (hard to find in-country)
- Razor and replacement blades

## Miscellaneous

- Most cooking supplies are available in-country, including eating and cooking utensils.
- A French press and coffee grounds (can be bought in Chengdu and at other sites)
- Measuring cups (If you love to bake and want to buy a toaster oven in Chengdu—or maybe a former Volunteer left you one—you might need some supplies!)

# PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

## Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

## Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that your luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

## Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

## **Insurance**

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

## **Personal Papers**

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

## **Voting**

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

## **Personal Effects**

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

## **Financial Management**

- Keep a bank account in your name in the U.S.
- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.

- Execute a Power of Attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



# CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

This list of numbers will help connect you with the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters to answer various questions. You can use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the toll-free number and extensions with your family so they can contact you in the event of an emergency.

**Peace Corps Headquarters**

**Toll-free Number:** 1.800.424.8580, Press 2, then  
Ext. # (see below)

**Peace Corps' Mailing Address:** Peace Corps  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps  
Headquarters  
1111 20th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20526

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/ Local Number</b>
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement EMA Region	Ext. 1856	202.692.1856
Programming or Country Information	China Desk	Ext. 2416	202.692.2416

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/ Local Number</b>
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (SATO Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1840	202.692.1840
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		1.800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
<i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470 9–5 EST	202.692.1470